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JUDITH AUGUSTA AND HER TIME

by Allen Cabaniss

Preliminary Note. A middle English poetic romance, "The Erle of Tolous," composed about the middle of the fourteenth century, may distantly reflect memory of an affair between Count Bernard of Barcelona and Empress Judith, second wife of Louis the Pious. Claiming to derive from a "lay of Bretayne," it seems to be a garbled, semi-legendary account, but except for the name of "Syr Barnard," all historical details have been lost. See Thomas C. Rumble, ed., *The Breton Lays in Middle English* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 135-177, for the text. The following essay is a survey of the actual record.

* * *

On October 3, 818, the dour court of Emperor Louis the Pious was gloomier than usual. Louis had just arrived on October 1 at Angers from a fierce struggle with rebellious Brittany. He found his queen, good Irmingard (mother of his sons Lothair, Pepin, and Louis the younger), ill, wracked by fever, and worn by prolonged loss of blood. She survived his return by two days, then died.¹

It had been a harsh year for the emperor. In late autumn of 817 he had faced but crushed a formidable revolt headed by his nephew, King Bernard of Italy.² In the spring of 818 the latter had died as result of the sentence of blinding inflicted upon

¹The anonymous *Vita Hludowici*, II, 31, as translated by Allen Cabaniss, *Son of Charlemagne* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1961; 2nd printing, 1965), 67; *Annales regni Francorum*, 818, as edited by R. Rau., *Fontes ad historiam regni Francorum aevi Karolini illustrandam*, I (Berlin: Rütten and Loening, 1956), 10-154; Thegan, *Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, 25, in Rau., *op. cit.*, 216-252. The foregoing works are hereinafter cited thus in the order named: VHLud. (followed by book and chapter number); *Son* (followed by page reference); *Ann. r. Fr.* (followed by the appropriate year); Thegan (followed by the chapter number).

² VHLud., II, 29:2 (*Son*, 65f).

him.³ An ominous and foreboding solar eclipse occurred on July 8.⁴ Then the Bretons had arrogantly and insolently risen in an effort to repudiate Louis's suzerainty. Subjugation of them required a murderous campaign through the swamps and fens of their land. Resistance collapsed only after assassination of Murman, pretender to kingship of Brittany.⁵

Irmingard's funeral obsequies completed, Louis proceeded by way of Rouen, Amiens, Cambrai, and Heristal to winter quarters at Aix-la-Chapelle.⁶ Reports of continued perfidy hounded his steps. Messengers from all areas of the state complained of troubles in their regions.⁷ The Basques were stirring up dissension in Septimania. Emissaries came to relate their efforts to correct ecclesiastical affairs, for above all else Louis "left nothing untried that seemed to advance the honor of God's holy church." There was, moreover, as always, an endeavor to rectify deficiencies in such public law as he had inherited along with the realm from his father.

Louis had passed his fortieth birthday during the summer of 818; and, although he would live to be sixty-two years old, he was by early medieval standards already an old man, burdened by duties that weighed heavily upon a son of Charlemagne. Probably there was also a growing current of criticism leveled against him for cruel treatment of his young nephew Bernard; perhaps his own conscience was gnawing at him. It is no wonder, therefore, that he began to think, as many of his retainers supposed, of abdication.⁸ It could be done easily enough, for shortly after his coronation by the pope, he had designated his son Lothair as co-emperor and had established a division of the realm for his three sons (817).⁹

Louis may have contemplated entrance into the monastic life which he so deeply admired. If so, it was not the first

³ *Ibid.*, II, 30:1 (*Son*, 66).

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 31 (*Son*, 67).

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 30:2 (*Son*, 67); Ann. r. Fr., 818.

⁶ Ann. r. Fr., 818 (Rouen, Amiens, Cambrai); VHLud., II, 31 (*Son*, 67) (Rouen, Amiens, Heristal).

⁷ VHLud., II, 31 (*Son*, 68).

⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 32 (*Son*, 68-70).

⁹ Ann. r. Fr., 817.

time¹⁰ nor would it be the last.¹¹ Once, in a moment of weakness, his father had briefly considered such an eventuality¹² and his great-uncle Carloman had actually gone through with both abdication and profession as monk.¹³ It was by no means an impossible arrangement.

In any case such action by Emperor Louis threatened to provoke political crisis or personal embarrassment as it had in connection with King Carloman. To avoid dangerous rocking of the ship of state, jittery grandees from all parts of the empire rallied to Louis's side and urged him to marry again.¹⁴ For all his piety Louis had not in an earlier day been stranger to dalliance and probably even then living near court was the shadowy illegitimate Alpaïs, recently bereft of her husband, Bigo, count of Paris, her father's dear friend and former chamberlain in Aquitaine.¹⁵ But Louis was as hesitant to take the serious step of another marriage as he had been at age sixteen for marriage to Irmingard. In both instances importunity of his councilors was required to make him act.¹⁶

During Christmas and Epiphany seasons of 818-819 the emperor finally agreed to a second marriage. He allowed his magnates to parade their nubile daughters before him in a "pageant of favorites."¹⁷ In his forty-first year and already "most pious," Louis still felt "the natural heat of the body"¹⁸ and had not lost his "eye for a pretty face and a comely form."¹⁹ There was also the example of Charlemagne's four or five official marriages (the third or fourth being in his forty-first year); but the son probably had no kindly thoughts for his father's habits. Choice fell upon the lovely, accomplished

¹⁰ VHLud., I, 19:1 (*Son*, 50f.).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, III, 44:2 (*Son*, 90).

¹² Allusion in Charlemagne's nuncupative will, recorded in Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, (Rau, *op. cit.*, 164-211.)

¹³ VHLud., I, 19:1 (*Son*, 50).

¹⁴ VHLud., II, 32:2 (*Son*, 69).

¹⁵ *Annales Hildesheimenses*, 816, in G. Waitz, ed., *Annales Hildesheimenses* (Hanover: Hahn, 1905; reprinted, 1947). These annals are hereinafter cited thus: *Ann. Hild.* (followed by the appropriate year).

¹⁶ VHLud., I, 8; II, 32:2 (*Son*, 39, 69).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 32:2 (*Son*, 69).

¹⁸ VHLud., I, 8 (*Son*, 39).

¹⁹ *Son*, 11 (introduction).

Judith, daughter of the very noble Count Welf of Alamannia and his wife, Eigilwi of Saxony.²⁰ The sacrament of holy matrimony was duly solemnized at Aix in February before the beginning of Lent.²¹ Shortly afterward there followed the ceremony of Judith's coronation as empress and a joyful acclamation by the assembled multitude declaring her "semper Augusta."²² It was a giddy height for a young girl about fifteen years of age, but, as events were to show, Judith proved equal to the occasion.

Little or nothing is known of her before she became the emperor's second wife. Her parents were wealthy and influential, of families with which it was desirable for a Carolingian ruler to be allied. Count Welf was of the same Alamannic stock as Louis's mother, Queen Hildegard; Eigilwi came from that noble people who had so long resisted Charlemagne's encroachments. Judith's date of birth must have been several years after the famous imperial coronation on Christmas 800; marriageable age was approximately fifteen years or less.

To judge from later references, her training was of highest order. But it was her youthful freshness and charm that made the initial impact at court. To those who saw her she appeared unusually beautiful.²³ Bishop Frechulf of Lisieux dared to write a few years afterward, "I can state without flattery that you surpass in beauty any queen I have ever seen or of whom I have ever heard."²⁴ In time Judith had bitter enemies, but even they conceded her gracefulness and attractiveness.²⁵ The young squint-eyed monk Walafrid was inordinately enthusiastic when he named her "Rachel" of the court²⁶ and declared that when

²⁰ Ann. r. Fr., 819; Thegan, 26.

²¹ Thegan, 26; Annales Xantenses, 819, in B. de Simson, *Annales Xantenses et annales Vedastini* (Hanover: Hahn, 1909), 1-33. The annals of Xanten are hereinafter cited thus: Ann. Xant. (followed by the appropriate year); the years, 831-873, are also given in Rau, *op. cit.*, II, 340-370.

²² Annals Mettenses priores, 830, in B. de Simson, ed., *Annales Mettenses priores* (Hanover: Hahn, 1905), 1-98. These annals are hereinafter cited thus: Ann. Mett. pr. (followed by the appropriate year).

²³ Thegan, 26, "pulchra valde"; Ann. Mett. pr., 830, "pulchram nimis"; Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici*, IV, line 763 (*Poetae latini aevi Carolini*, II, 79; hereinafter cited as PLAC, followed by volume and page number), "pulcherima."

²⁴ Frechulf, *Chronicon*, II, praef. (*Patrologiae cursus completus: series Latina*, cvi, 1115B-1116D; hereinafter cited as PL, followed by volume and column number).

²⁵ Agobard, "Manifesto" (*Liber apologeticus*), 5 (PL civ, 314B).

²⁶ Walafrid Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, line 177 (PLAC, II, 375).

he could not see her or hear her voice he was torn between fear and hope, wondering whether he had pleased or displeased her.²⁷

But Judith had other qualities. She was a surprisingly intelligent and talented young woman, at least according to Walafrid Strabo,²⁸ but the fact is confirmed by a chronicler who described her as “profoundly versed in the flowers of philosophy.”²⁹ Allusively comparing her with the Biblical Judith, Miriam, Hulda (the prophetess, II Kings 22:14), and classical Sappho, Walafrid asserted that her life was one of culture and genius, that she was rich in learning, powerful in reasoning, facile in speech.³⁰ By implication the new empress could sing, compose verse and music, and engage in both light and serious conversation.

Mention of Miriam has peculiar interest: “Miriam struck her tambourines of taut and rasping leather,” stated Walafrid, “but Judith speeds over her musical instruments (*organa*) with sweet-sounding touch.”³¹ The imperial palace at Aix had possessed an organ ever since 757, gift of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V to King Pepin, Louis’s grandfather.³² Was that the instrument Judith played? Presumably so, although others were surely available. Judith’s ability must have been quite notable, for in 826 Emperor Louis employed a Venetian priest named George who claimed he could construct a new organ in Greek fashion. George was paid from public revenues and was provided whatever he needed for his work.³³ The event was of sufficient importance to receive considerable notoriety and attention, for that organ was the first one built in Frankland.³⁴ Surely it was done for Judith either as a fine new gift or because the older one was no longer satisfactory.

²⁷ Walafrid Strabo, *Judith Augustae*, lines 7f. (PLAC, II, 382).

²⁸ Walafrid Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 192-208 (PLAC, II, 375f.).

²⁹ Ann. Mett. pr., 830.

³⁰ Walafrid Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, lines 202-206 (PLAC, II, 376).

³¹ *Ibid.*, lines 197f. (PLAC, II, 376).

³² Ann. r. Fr., 757.

³³ VHLud., II, 40:1 (*Son*, 81); Einhard, *Historia translationis ss. Marcellini et Petri*, VII, 75 (PL civ, 583B).

³⁴ Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici* IV, line 639 (PLAC, II, 76).

The first few months of the new marriage passed uneventfully. One writer commented, perhaps too realistically, that Louis "remained at home in his palace, relaxing, yet blooming, keeping his youthful wife in awe of him, and according to St. Paul's admonition, rendering to her what was due to a married woman."³⁵ A naive chronicler remarked, with straight face but nonetheless amusingly, that the emperor "rested for four years, during which time naught of historical importance happened."³⁶ He was mistaken, of course, for although nothing further is known of Judith until 823 (except that about 821 she gave birth to a daughter, Hildegard), many significant events were transpiring in Frankland and many of them certainly affected her.

Serious trouble continued to be endemic, especially on frontiers of the empire, all of it impinging directly on the Frankish government. But with relentless regularity Louis spent autumns hunting in the Ardennes and the Vosges,³⁷ and Judith was his companion on those occasions. During her pregnancy preceding Hildegard's birth, there may have been an undercurrent of uncertainty throughout the realm, but it was relieved for a moment by the fact that the child was a girl. So much is intimated by Louis's action at the Nijmegen diet of May, 821. There he caused the 817 partition of his state among the sons of his first wife to be read and publicly reconfirmed as he had already done before in 819.³⁸ Still further at Thionville in October he arranged marriage of his firstborn, co-Emperor Lothair, to Irmingard, daughter of Hugo, an important count of Tours.³⁹ Another gesture to reassure his barons of constitutional stability was reconciliation with his powerful kinsmen, Adalard, Wala, and Bernarius, cousins of his father.⁴⁰ Later he negotiated a suitable marriage for his second son, Pepin of Aquitaine, to Ingeltrud, daughter of another powerful count, Theobert, a second cousin of both Charlemagne and St. William of Gellone.⁴¹

³⁵ Agobard, "Manifesto" (*Liber apologeticus*), 2 (PL civ, 308D).

³⁶ Ann. Hild., 819.

³⁷ Many references in VHLud. (*Son*) and the various annals of the time.

³⁸ Ann. r. Fr., 821.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ VHLud., II, 34:2 (*Son*, 72).

⁴¹ Ann. r. Fr., 822.

Although Judith's first child was a daughter and although some uneasiness about the constitution had been allayed by Louis, the barons were now aware that the birth of a son might seriously disrupt the situation. Soon the emperor began to feel a burden of pressures from which he tried desperately to relieve himself. Most drastic was an action taken at the diet of Attigny in August, 822. In order to dramatize his willingness to maintain peace in the empire, Louis submitted to public penance for all the ills he and his father had caused, especially for his own maltreatment of King Bernard of Italy.⁴² Contemporaries stated piously that it was voluntary, but the inference conveyed by their writings is that it was a necessity forced upon him.⁴³ Not since Emperor Theodosius yielded to St. Ambrose had such an open, abject humiliation taken place, nor would it happen again until Emperor Henry IV knelt before Pope Gregory VII at Canossa.

Judith, still young and impressionable, only about eighteen years of age, must have felt intense mortification as she witnessed the supposedly edifying demonstration, or as she heard of it. She may well have wondered about her husband's strength and ability as a ruler. Like Princess Michal of old, looking upon King David in another kind of religious exhibitionism, she may have "despised him in her heart" (II Sam. 6:16). But if so, she restrained herself, storing up memory of it for later use. On the other hand, she may have been a source of consolation and encouragement for Louis, for Michal's fate did not befall the queen of Frankland: in late September she became pregnant again—and the latent fear of upheaval began once more to manifest itself. In addition, prodigies of nature caused superstitious dread even in the emperor's mind: an earthquake that shook the palace of Aix, strange sounds in the nighttime, destruction of villages by fire from heaven, unusual and prolonged lightning from clear skies, shattering hail accompanied by deadly rain of stones, and plague. Louis himself believed that they were signs

⁴² *VHlud.*, II, 35:1 (*Son*, 73).

⁴³ Paschasius Radbertus, *Vita sancti Adalhardi*, 51, translated by Allen Cabaniss, *Charlemagne's Cousins* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1967), 56f. These works are hereinafter cited thus in the order named: *Adalard* (followed by chapter reference); *Cousins* (followed by page reference).

portending vast calamity for Frankland.⁴⁴

The next decade was to prove that the omens were fulfilled when, on June 13, 823, Empress Judith, aged nineteen, gave birth to a son, named Charles for his grandfather, handsome, but unhappily known to history as "the Bald."⁴⁵ The child was indeed a threat to the constitution of 817, and many Carolingian grandees, both secular and ecclesiastical, instinctively recognized it, none less so than the parents. Within less than a quarter of a century Louis's nephew, the historian Nithard, would recall the situation thus: "When Charles was born, his father did not know what to do for him, because he had already divided the whole empire among the other sons."⁴⁶

Whether by chance or intention, Lothair and his wife Irmingard had just returned from Rome, where on Easter Sunday (April 5) he had received papal confirmation as co-emperor.⁴⁷ Apparently at Judith's prompting, Louis appealed for his assistance and Lothair agreed to stand as sponsor at Charles' baptism.⁴⁸ With some reluctance he also took an oath to grant Charles whatever part of the realm his father indicated and swore that he himself would forever defend and protect his half-brother against all enemies.⁴⁹ Time would ultimately resolve Louis's problem of a heritage for Charles, but problem it remained until Louis's final year.

In the meanwhile, events to the south were occurring that would affect the delicate balance of the Franish state. Early in 820 Count Bera of Barcelona, accused and convicted of fraud and treachery, was dispossessed of his authority and banished.⁵⁰ His son Willemund may have succeeded him for a brief interval, but his interests coincided with those of aggressive Muslim leaders with whom he finally allied himself.⁵¹ It is,

⁴⁴ VHLud., II, 37:2 (*Son*, 77).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*; Ann. Xant., 823.

⁴⁶ Nithard, *Historiarum libri quattuor*, I, 3, in Rau, *op. cit.*, I, 386-486; herein-after cited as Nithard, followed by book and chapter numbers.

⁴⁷ Ann. r. Fr., 823.

⁴⁸ Nithard, II, 1; VHLud., III, 60 (*Son*, 116).

⁴⁹ Nithard, I, 3.

⁵⁰ VHLud., II, 33 (*Son*, 71).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, II, 41:1 (*Son*, 82).

therefore, likely that he was quickly set aside in favor of an imperial appointee, the famous (or notorious) Bernard, marquis of Gothia.

The latter, who played a significant role in Carolingian history until his death in 844, was son of Count William of Toulouse (first cousin of Charlemagne, mentioned above as St. William of Gellone).⁵² Born about 800, he was sponsored at baptism by the future emperor, Louis, then king of Aquitaine.⁵³ He was also a brother-in-law of Wala, another cousin and close friend of his father.⁵⁴ An older brother, Count Theodoric, had been one of Charlemagne's most capable and trusted chieftains in the long Saxon war.⁵⁵ Bernard was already a frequent and welcome visitor at court; for a year after the birth of Charles the Bald, he was on Summer St. John's Day (824) married in a colorful ceremony at Aix-la-Chapelle to Dhuoda, scion of a noble and wealthy Septimanian house.⁵⁶ Only a few years older than the beautiful empress, he became very quickly one of her confidants.

The birth of Charles—"Benjamin" to her coterie⁵⁷—gave Judith an ambition that she pursued relentlessly and even ruthlessly until he had what she considered his rightful share in the Carolingian empire. She began immediately to surround herself with those whose paramount loyalty was to her and her son. In 825 or 826 her widowed mother, Eigilwi, was made abbess of Chelles, a wealthy foundation near Paris for highborn women, where in succession Charlemagne's mother and sister had presided until they died. Judith's brothers, Conrad and Rudolf, were brought to court,⁵⁸ as well as her sister, Emma, for whom

⁵² J. Calmette, *De Bernardo sancti Guillelmi filio* (Toulouse: Privat, 1902), is the best full length account.

⁵³ Thegan, 36.

⁵⁴ Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium Arsenii seu vita Walae*, II, 8:4, translated in Cabaniss, *Cousins*, 161; cited hereinafter as *Wala*, followed by book, chapter, and paragraph numbers, and page reference in *Cousins*.

⁵⁵ Ann. r. Fr., rev., 782 (this is a recension of the Ann. r. Fr., also given in Rau, *op. cit.*, I, as mentioned above in Note 1).

⁵⁶ Edouard Bondurant, ed. and trans., *Le manuel de Dhuoda (843): L'éducation carolingienne* (Paris: Picard, 1887), praef., 5.

⁵⁷ Walafrid Strabo, *De imagine Tetrici*, line 178 (PLAC, II, 375).

⁵⁸ Thegan, 36; Nithard, I, 3; Walafrid Strabo, *Ad Chuonradum comitem* (PLAC, II, 387 f.).

she arranged marriage in 827 to Louis's namesake, youngest of his sons by Irmingard and nominal king of Bavaria although he was then still living at court.⁵⁹

There were others: the youthful, affectionate Walafrid, monk of Reichenau, who was her true courtier and troubadour and protégé of Conrad;⁶⁰ the still younger Bodo, of the same Alamannic stock as Judith, a handsome cleric who later boasted of his many amorous conquests at Aix;⁶¹ and the elderly Abbot Adalard, cousin of Charlemagne, who, blinded by his dotage, was duly impressed by the exemplary spectacle of Louis's penance at Attigny⁶² and by the interest which Judith and Emma displayed toward his pet project, the abbey of New Corvey in Saxony.

There were still others whose good will was curried by the empress with her shrewd, bland charm, namely, the Jews of Frankland. During the third and fourth decades of the ninth century, there was a remarkable flourishing of Jewish communities upon which imperial favors were showered. Untaxed, exempt from trial by ordeal, not required to do feudal service, they were allowed to hold Christian slaves and were permitted to hinder baptism of their pagan slaves. In lawsuits they were granted change of venue from local to imperial courts and a special official was designated to guarantee their privileges.⁶³ The bishop of Lyons, Agobard, charged that Jews had free access to the emperor's presence, that many nobles were using rabbis as chaplains, that rural folk were changing the market day from Saturday to Sunday so as to attend synagogue instead of church, and that Christians were going into hiding or even becoming converts to Judaism.⁶⁴

What raises suspicion that Judith was in some way related to favorable treatment of Jews in Frankland is Agobard's further

⁵⁹ Ann. Xant., 827.

⁶⁰ Walafrid Strabo, *Carmina*, XXIIIa, XXVI, XXXVII (PLAC, II, 378f., 382, 387f.).

⁶¹ Paulus Albarus, *Letter XVI*, 2 (PL cxxi, 484D).

⁶² Agobard *De dispensatione ecclesiasticarum rerum*, 3 (PL civ, 228B).

⁶³ Allen Cabaniss, *Agobard of Lyons: Churchman and Critic* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1953), 47 and the evidence therein cited.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 65f.

charge that their women were wearing extravagant clothes which they claimed were given to them as presents by the emperor's relatives as well as by wives of high ranking palatine officials.⁶⁵ The evidence is not conclusive, but it is suggestive. The name *Judith* means *Jewess*, but it was after all the name of a Biblical heroine. It was supposed by ninth-century Christians, relying on St. Isidore's *Etymologies* (vii, 8, 29) to signify *one who judges* or *one who praises*.⁶⁶ The Jews of that day, however, knew the real etymology and may have tried to capitalize on it. In such a connection significance may attach to the names of some other contemporaries. Whether they were given because they were peculiarly Jewish or merely Biblical, it is impressive to note several of them, such as Jesse, Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Zechariah, Isaac, Solomon, and so forth.

In an effort to regain ground lost by humiliation at Attigny, Louis—at Judith's urging or with her approval—took advantage of any opportunity that presented itself. One was coronation of his son, Lothair, already mentioned. Another was baptism of young Charles, also alluded to above. Still another was consecration of his illegitimate half-brother Drogo as bishop of Metz (June 30, 823).⁶⁷ The strong, lifelong attachment of Drogo to Louis probably indicated similarly intense loyalty and devotion to Empress Judith. It is, therefore, not beyond probability to discern the hand of Judith in Drogo's advancement.

Another occasion already noted was marriage of Louis's kinsman and godson, Bernard, to Dhuoda. Some scholars have without adequate evidence posited a blood relationship between Judith and Dhuoda. But there may have been some intimacy making it possible that Judith, for reasons of her own, was the one who suggested the alliance. Still another occasion was an event of October and November, 824, a successful invasion of Brittany to suppress a revolt. Louis was accompanied on it by his sons, Pepin and the younger Louis, and Count Hugo of Tours, father-in-law of Lothair, in a show of family solidarity.⁶⁸ On November 17 there was a triumphal return to

⁶⁵ Agobard, *De insolentia Iudaeorum*, 5 (PL civ, 74C).

⁶⁶ Frechulf, *Chronicon*, II, praef. (PL cvi, 1115B-1116D).

⁶⁷ Ann. r. Fr., 823.

⁶⁸ Ermoldus Nigellus, *In honorem Hludowici*, IV, lines 123-125 (PLAC, II, 62).

the city of Rouen where the empress and probably the baby Charles were waiting to greet the imperial party.⁶⁹

By far the most spectacular occasion, however, was the baptism of King Hériold of the Danes along with his family and retainers. At that event Empress Judith played a prominent role. The festivities, which took place in June 826, perhaps on Summer St. John's Day, are described with imaginative detail by Ermold Nigél.⁷⁰ The impressive religious ceremonies were performed in the church of St. Alban at Mainz. The building was a fitting theater, ornately decorated with pictures of Old and New Testament scenes: the garden of Eden, temptation of Eve, murder of Abel, Noah's ark and the flood, Abraham, Joseph, the Exodus, giving of the Law to Moses, Joshua's victories, Solomon's temple, Christ's life from annunciation to ascension; scenes from pagan history about Cyrus, Ninus, Alexander, Romulus and Remus, Hannibal; and finally scenes from Christian history showing Constantine and the city of Constantinople, Theodosius, Charles Martel, Pepin the Short, and Charlemagne.

At the baptism Emperor Louis served as godfather to Hériold. "The beautiful Empress Judith" was sponsor for the Danish queen, and co-Emperor Lothair for the Danish heir apparent. The Frankish rulers then gave lavish gifts to the newly baptized Danes. Judith presented the queen a tunic of cloth-of-gold weighted with precious stones, a golden chaplet encircled with gems, a long golden necklace, golden armbands, a golden cincture studded with jewels, and a cloth-of-gold mantilla for her shoulders. (Was that by any chance the kind of clothes she had been dowering upon Jewish women?)

A procession then formed and entered the sanctuary for Mass. Louis followed the clergy, flanked by Hilduin and Helisachar, with Gerung slightly in front bearing a mace and crown. Lothair came next with Hériold. Judith, escorted in great honor by Hugo of Tours and Matfrid of Orléans, was followed immediately by the Danish queen. Playfully, little Charles, just past his third birthday, ran in and out near his

⁶⁹ Ann. r. Fr., 824.

⁷⁰ Ermoldus Nigellus, *op. cit.*, IV, lines 179-622 (PLAC, II, 63-75).

parents, noisily striking the marble columns and pavement with sticks.

After Mass there was a sumptuous and prolonged state dinner with finest foods and wines served in finest dishes and cups by an elaborate retinue of household servants. Louis sat on an elevated dais, "the beautiful Judith at his side" (after she had first genuflected before him), with Lothair, Heriold, and other grandees, both Frankish and Danish, ranged nearby. The Danes expressed astonished pleasure at the food and drink, at the well trained servants, and at the handsome little boy who was obviously enjoying himself and providing entertainment for others by his antics.

On the following day there was a great hunt on a green, forested, jungle-like island in the Rhine, which was a well stocked royal game preserve. There both Franks and Danes prepared for the chase. Even the emperor's "very beautiful wife" mounted a steed. The forest echoed with barking of dogs, shouts of men, and blaring of bugles, as spears, arrows, and knives brought down the prey. Beaters drove some animals out into open fields where stands had been erected for ladies and less daring hunters. Frightened deer, wild boars, and bears were slaughtered in great numbers. Young Charles, screaming and dancing with delight, demanded a horse and bow and arrows to join his father. His mother of course refused. Charles clamored louder and louder. Neither Judith nor his preceptor could quiet him. Several young hunters therefore captured alive a small doe and brought it to the place where Charles and his mother were stationed. Cruel as the entire hunt was, nothing was crueller than what then happened: "The boy struck the beast's quivering body."

When the hunt was over, the men were ravenous with hunger. Under Judith's supervision, some green arbors had been constructed in the midst of a grove. There tables were spread with food. Louis and his "beautiful yoke-mate," Lothair and the nobler guests, sat down to eat. The rest of the company sprawled on grassy areas nearby or under shady trees. After much feasting on fresh game and drinking of wine, the weary party returned with gaiety to the palace where the slain animals were distributed, young Charles carrying the body of his doe.

After the service of Vespers, the two days of festivity came to an end. As an occasion it had been a triumph for Louis—and for Judith.⁷¹

But already signs of disaffection and division were manifesting themselves. By October, 826, there was serious threat of Muslim advance into the Spanish March where Count Bernard was governor of Barcelona. By 827 the situation had worsened. Saracens laid waste the regions of Cerdaña and Vallés, then moved onward.⁷² Emperor Louis ordered his son, King Pepin of Aquitaine, and his emissaries, Counts Hugo of Tours and Matfrid of Orléans, to hasten to Bernard's relief. It was then that disloyalty reared its head. The three deliberately advanced slowly, delaying as long as possible, until the Muslims had captured Zaragoza, devastated the surrounding countryside, and laid siege to Barcelona.⁷³

In February, 828, at Aix-la-Chapelle, the angry emperor deprived Hugo (Lothair's father-in-law) and Matfrid of their offices, replacing Matfrid with a cousin of Count Bernard, Odo, whose daughter Irmintrud was destined in time to be married to young Charles.⁷⁴ Late in June came reports that the Saracens were pressing even harder. Louis dispatched his son Lothair to defend the march. The latter arrived in Lyons, hotbed of the rising discontent, and there dallied while awaiting news from Spain. His brother Pepin, also under paternal orders, arrived from Aquitaine for a conference. Perhaps influenced by their malcontent surroundings and hearing that Moorish advances were being slowed down, they abandoned the project, despite their father's wishes, and returned, Pepin to Aquitaine, Lothair to court.⁷⁵ By spring of 829, however, Count Bernard had without assistance taken the initiative, raised the siege of his city, and hurled back to Muslim hosts.⁷⁶

⁷¹ All from Ermoldus Nigellus as indicated in the preceding note.

⁷² Ann. r. Fr., 827.

⁷³ VHIud., II, 41 1 (*Son*, 82f).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 42:1 (*Son*, 84); Ann. r. Fr., 828; Nithard, IV, 6.

⁷⁵ VHIud., II, 42:2 (*Son*, 85). The sentence rendered, "When the father arrived at Lyons with his paternal commands . . .," was a careless translation; it should read, "When he [Lothair] arrived at Lyons in obedience to paternal commands . . ."

⁷⁶ Ann. r. Fr., 829.

In the meanwhile young Charles was growing, or according to standards of that day, was growing up, as in June, 829, he passed his sixth birthday. At the tender age of three his father had been anointed and crowned as king of Aquitaine, an office he had received at birth. At seven the future emperor was already a good horseman. At thirteen, deemed of age, he was girded with a sword, and a year later was entrusted with joint direction of a military campaign.⁷⁷ Time was ripe, therefore, for a change in Charles's training. Up to this point it had been in the hands of his mother and clerics serving at her direction. We have already seen him at the hunt in 826 under close attention of his mother and a preceptor, probably Markward, later abbot of Prüm.⁷⁸ Three years afterward Bishop Frechulf of Lisieux prepared for Judith a survey of universal history to be used in teaching Charles, describing him as "an honor to the world and a delight to men," who seemed indeed to be his grandfather risen again to scatter the fog and bring light to a renewed earth.⁷⁹ But time had come for a Carolingian boy to have more than feminine and clerical tutelage. Both Louis and Judith were aware of that need and both no doubt discussed the problem.

First, however, it was necessary to define an area of responsibility with which young Charles could be identified. That was what Judith had been working for ever since his birth, but such an achievement meant upsetting the constitution of 817. Despite Judith's pressure, Louis had successfully evaded decision thus far. But by the August diet of 829 at Worms, he was angry at his sons Lothair and Pepin for their refusal to aid in the Spanish March. Consequently one of his earlier acts at the assembly was to redistribute his empire. In the presence of his magnates, including his sons Lothair and Louis the younger, he solemnly granted to little Charles lordship over Alamannia, Rhaetia, and part of Burgundy, lands taken from domains hitherto assigned to Lothair and Louis. The nobles were aghast, above all the two deprived sons, who departed in dudgeon to their remaining possessions. When their brother Pepin heard

⁷⁷ VHLud., I, 4-6 (*Son*, 34-38).

⁷⁸ Lupus, *Letter 85*, to Markward, speaks of Charles as "your pupil" (*alumnus*) (PL cxix, 562AB).

⁷⁹ Frechulf, *Chronicon*, II, praef. (PL cvi, 1115B-1116D).

what had happened, he was equally indignant because he knew that he was not immune to similar deprivation.⁸⁰

The constitution of 817 was violated and the foundations of the state were severely shaken. Louis discovered, presumably for the first time, that secret machinations were going on all around him, that his state was rapidly splitting into sharply opposing factions, that a web of intrigue was enmeshing him.⁸¹ In order to erect a bulwark against the crawling menace, he dramatically summoned to Aix as his chamberlain, his second in command, especially charged with supervising young Charles's training,⁸² the gallant hero of Barcelona, Count Bernard, who thereupon removed with his family to the imperial court. "That action," stated Louis's sympathetic biographer, "did not put an end to the hotbed of discord, but rather gave it increase." The malcontents, however, could not as yet betray themselves until sufficient forces were gathered.⁸³

The relatively sober historian Nithard wrote of Bernard that, in his new place of high responsibility, he threw caution to the wind, took advantage of the government he was supposed to strengthen, and began surreptitiously to subvert it.⁸⁴ The unfavorable Paschasius Radbertus claimed that older trusted officials of the palace were banished from court and that Bernard rapidly gathered a band of vain, wanton scoundrels in their place, among them his brother Heribert.⁸⁵ Paschasius believed indeed that all those changes were at Judith's instigation: she kept from the emperor persons whom she disapproved; she insinuated what he should hear, whom he should favor, to what he should give assent, and the decrees he should issue.⁸⁶

Even the kind and affable Walafrid Strabo felt an air of uneasiness that seems to be reflected in his poems on Theodoric's statue at Aix and on the vision of a monk named

⁸⁰ Thegan, 35.

⁸¹ *VHlud.*, II, 43 (*Son*, 87).

⁸² Nithard, I, 3.

⁸³ *VHlud.*, II, 43 (*Son*, 87).

⁸⁴ Nithard, I, 3.

⁸⁵ *Wala*, II, 8:5 (*Cousins*, 161).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 9:5, 6 (*Cousins*, 166f).

Wettin.⁸⁷ In the former he set the imperial family and household against the dark background of Ostrogothic Italy; in the latter he daringly depicted Charlemagne suffering torments of purgatory—both of them singularly strange and foreboding in view of his position as a welcome visitor at court. Abbot Wala of Corbie, a friend, relative, and erstwhile brother-in-law of Bernard, began to receive a stream of magnates begging him to intercede with his kinsman; but his effort was to no avail and he himself became disillusioned. His interest, however, was attracted and he maintained a group of clerical spies at court to report developments to him.⁸⁸

As so many times before and since, it was inevitable that deeper issues were obscured by more superficial ones, real or imagined. We may ask what were those deeper issues. Was it a mother's desperate conniving for her son to have a rightful place in the society of the time? Was it resistance of stalwart bishops to encroachments of the Jews, to spoliation of the church, to debasement of Christian ethical standards? Was it a struggle of the baronial party against concentration of authority at court? Was it a confrontation of constitutionalism with incipient absolutism? Was it resentment of the dispossessed against a new party in power?

Whatever the issue, there had to be a precise moment, a provocation, in which emotions and tensions could find expression. Apparently it was Empress Judith who provided the excuse. She had accomplished her purpose in securing status for her son Charles, and it was through her influence that Bernard and his family were brought to court.⁸⁹ She and the count of Barcelona were near the same age. She and Dhuoda may have been friends. It was reported that the powers of the somber emperor, fifty-one years of age, already lukewarm (*tepescere*), had begun to grow cold (*frigescere*);⁹⁰ it was said that "he never showed his white teeth in a smile";⁹¹ and he was indeed

⁸⁷ Walafrid Strabo, *Visio Wettini* (PLAC, II, 301-333). A prose account by Heito is given in PLAC, II, 267-275.

⁸⁸ *Wala*, II, 8: 5-7 (*Cousins*, 161f).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 9: 5 (*Cousins*, 166).

⁹⁰ Agobard, "Manifesto" (*Liber apologeticus*), 2 (PL civ, 308D).

⁹¹ Thegan, 19.

suffering acutely from gout.⁹² It was no wonder that the court of Aix underwent a startling change.⁹² It was now filled on high festivals with "strolling musicians and actors, jesters and mimes, flute-players and guitarists" and people at the banquet boards "were laughing at the grotesquerie" (that is, all but Louis).⁹⁴ Revelries were turning night into day and day into night.⁹⁵ The official annals end on an extraordinarily festive note: in the year 829 there was "great joy and merry-making" at observance of Martinmas (November 11), St. Andrew's Day (November 30), and Christmas.⁹⁶ Louis's anonymous biographer, probably a palatine intimate, added that the related festivals—St. Stephen (December 26), St. John Evangelist (December 27), Holy Innocents (December 28), and possibly the remainder of the Twelve Days (through Epiphany, January 6, 830)⁹⁷—were similarly celebrated.⁹⁸ A breath of the warm, gay, semi-pagan Midi had penetrated the gloomy north,

⁹² Annales Bertiniani, 830, in Rau., *op. cit.*, II, 12-286; hereinafter cited as Ann. Bert., followed by the appropriate year.

⁹³ Wala, II, 8:6 (*Cousins*, 162).

⁹⁴ Thegan, 19.

⁹⁵ Wala, II, 7:3 (*Cousins*, 159).

⁹⁶ Ann. r. Fr., 829.

⁹⁷ Ann. Mett. pr., 830, mentions the feast of Epiphany.

⁹⁸ The concatenation of feast days that are named raises an interesting thought: in the later Middle Ages they were the days within which were celebrated the Feast of Fools and the Boy Bishop revels with their related *tripudia*. According to E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), I, 275, the earliest clear notice of the former is at the end of the twelfth century and (*ibid.*, 338) of the others in the year 911. His documentation indicates also that the latter were performed earlier than 911. Enumeration of the specific days here suggests that the festivities were celebrated as early as 829.

A tantalizing remark by Agobard seems to confirm that assumption: he stated in his "Manifesto" (*Liber apologeticus*), 5 (PL civ, 314A), "Some say that the lady of the palace... *ludat pueriliter*, while some priests look on and many *colludentibus*..." The words in Latin can be translated quite flatly as, "(the queen) plays childishly... and many join with her in the games..." But the verb *ludat* recalls the noun *ludi*, "the plays"; the adverb *pueriliter* could mean "as a boy," "like a boy," "boyishly," or (is it possible?) "dressed as a boy"; and *colludentibus* may intimate that clerics participated in the particular observances, whatever they were. The words do not prove anything with a degree of certainty, but it must be admitted that they are strongly suggestive. See the delightful (but "dated") discussion by Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949; trans. R.F.C. Hull from the German ed. of 1944), especially treatment of the words *ludus* and *colludo* on pp. 35f. Of less historical scholarship but more contemporary significance there is, for whatever it is worth, Harvey Cox, *The Feast of Fools* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

as it would later when Duchess Eleanor of Aquitaine became Louis VII's queen.

On Ash Wednesday (March 2), 830, at the urging of Count Bernard, Louis, despite his ailment, set out on a difficult expedition along the seacoast to quell a Breton uprising, remaining away over a month. Contrary to usual practice, Judith did not accompany him nor presumably did Bernard.⁹⁹ However innocent the circumstance may have been, pent-up emotions and resentments broke forth like bilge water in a mounting torrent of ugly gossip. The "woman" (not "queen" or "empress"), the woman had turned to lasciviousness, at first secretly, then shamelessly. At the beginning only a few knew about that, but soon many, and finally everyone in the court, kingdom, indeed the whole world. Younger men were snickering, older ones grieving, grandees judging it insufferable.¹⁰⁰ The palace, declared Paschasius Radbertus, was now "a brothel where adultery is queen and an adulterer reigns";¹⁰¹ he declared still further that Bernard had actually gained control over the emperor by employment of soothsayers, diviners, seers, dream-interpreters, and consultants of entrails¹⁰²—or so the populace thought.¹⁰³

Judith, of course, had her friends and ardent admirers: Walafrid Strabo and Bishop Frechulf, already mentioned, as well as others who still spoke of her kindness and urbanity; and there were many clerical courtiers who enjoyed and participated in her sprightly activities which made the dour palace sparkle.¹⁰⁴ There was also (apparently) some effort at counter-propaganda. The strange and shocking "vision of a certain poor

⁹⁹ Ann. Bert., 830.

¹⁰⁰ Agobard, "Manifesto" (*Liber apologeticus*), 2 (PL civ, 309A).

¹⁰¹ *Wala*, II, 8:6 (*Cousins*, 162).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, II, 9:1, 5 (*Cousins*, 164, 166).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, II, 9:7 (*Cousins*, 167).

¹⁰⁴ Agobard, "Manifesto" (*Liber apologeticus*), 5 (PL civ, 314AB).

On the other hand, Agobard's words *ludat pueriliter* may quite simply reflect a passage from Phaedrus, *Fabularum Aesopiarum libri quinque*, III, Fabula 8, lines 4f.:
Hi speculum in cathedra matris ut positum fuit

Pueriliter ludentes forte inspexerant

[As they (a brother and sister) played in childlike manner, they looked perhaps into the mirror placed on their mother's chair].

little woman" of Laon can be interpreted in that manner.¹⁰⁵ Among others (Charlemagne and Bigo), good¹⁰⁶ Queen Irmingard, dead less than a dozen years, was portrayed as in torment, millstones weighing her down in mire, while she cried out, "Go, ask my Lord Emperor of his mercy to help me, wretch that I am." To make certain that Louis would recognize the communication, Irmingard gave a sign, "At the time of my espousal¹⁰⁷ I spoke with him alone in an orchard [or, "open space"];¹⁰⁸ to this day no one but us knows about that conversation." The vision appears to be an effort to magnify Judith by vilifying Irmingard's memory and thus indirectly to validate the claims of young Charles against his older half-brothers.

There were, however, more grievous rumors than of immorality at court. It was reported to Wala by his spies that a plot was afoot by Bernard to murder the emperor and make it appear that he had died of his infirmity.¹⁰⁹ The expedition to Brittany at Bernard's urging lent credence to the report.¹¹⁰ But there was more: not only Louis but his three older sons and their leading supporters were to be slain by whatever guile Bernard could contrive.¹¹¹ Word was sent to King Pepin of Aquitaine that the expedition purportedly against the Bretons was in reality directed against him in hope that both father and son would perish in battle against each other.¹¹² It was still further rumored that King Louis of Bavaria, youngest of the older sons, the one who had married Judith's sister and who spent more time at Aix in quasi-detention than in his own lands, could from his own knowledge of court intrigue verify all those reports.¹¹³ It was presumed that after murder of the emperor and three kings, Bernard would set aside Dhuoda, marry Judith

¹⁰⁵ *Visio cuiusdam pauperulae mulieris*, in W. Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter* (3rd ed., Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1873), I, 207f., Note 1.

¹⁰⁶ Agobard, *Liber apologeticus*, 8 (2) (PL civ, 316A), was one of many who always characterized Irmingard as "good."

¹⁰⁷ Reading *desponsationis* instead of *depositionis*.

¹⁰⁸ That is, *pomario* or *pomerio*.

¹⁰⁹ *Wala*, II, 8:6 (*Cousins*, 162).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 9:3 (*Cousins*, 165).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, 8:6 (*Cousins*, 162).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, II, 9:3 (*Cousins*, 165).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, II, 9:4 (*Cousins*, 165f.).

(with whom he already had illicit relations), and seize the throne, or failing that, take Judith away to his Spanish March.¹¹⁴

Revolt, therefore, could not be stayed. Before Louis returned from his Breton expedition, a meeting of malcontents was held in Paris.¹¹⁵ Leaders among them were Archchaplain Hilduin, Bishop Jesse of Amiens, Count Hugo, Count Matfrid, Abbot Helisachar, Gotefrid, and many other great barons who like them had been either replaced or thrust into the background by Louis under pressure from Bernard or Judith.¹¹⁶ Reluctantly (or was it?)¹¹⁷ Abbot Wala was drawn into the net and made an ostensible leader of the conspiracy.¹¹⁸ Pepin was enticed from Aquitaine. On the way to Paris he and his army passed through Orléans where, as first act of the revolution, he removed Count Odo, Bernard's cousin, and reinstated Matfrid. All the conspirators then proceeded from Paris to Verberie where they entrenched themselves and where they drew up a formidable list of allegations:¹¹⁹ violation of the constitution of 817, dispossession of senior officials, Bernard's overweening insolence, his and Judith's adultery, sorcery—something to please all dissidents.¹²⁰ Their announced intention was to depose Louis, consign Judith to the oblivion of conventual confinement, slay Count Bernard, and conceal young Charles.¹²¹

As soon as Louis received intelligence of the plot, he abandoned the Breton campaign and hastened to Aix. Duly warned, Bernard and his family promptly fled for safety to Barcelona, where they could rely upon his adherents for protection.¹²² The empress found asylum at the convent of St.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 10:2 (*Cousins*, 168).

¹¹⁵ Ann. Bert., 830.

¹¹⁶ Nithard, I, 3; Thegan, 36.

¹¹⁷ After Charlemagne's death Wala had been slow to recognize Louis, but he had ultimately done homage. Many other nobles had waited for his acquiescence before they acknowledged Louis; cf. VHLud., II, 21:1 (*Son*, 54).

¹¹⁸ Wala, II, 9:5 (*Cousins*, 166).

¹¹⁹ VHLud., III, 44:1 (*Son*, 89).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Ann. Bert., 830; Ann. Mett. pr., 830.

¹²² Ann. Bert., 830.

Mary in Laon.¹²³ Young Charles probably accompanied his mother on her flight. The emperor then manfully determined to await the conspirators at the May diet in Compiègne. Some of the more impetuous barons, led by Count Warin of Mâcon and Count Lantbert of Nantes, violated sanctuary at Laon, seized Judith, haled her before the rebel barons, and threatened her with death by torture unless she acquiesced in their demands.¹²⁴

She was compelled to promise her influence on Louis to persuade him to submit to tonsure. She herself was forced to agree to the veil. Judith was thereupon escorted to the emperor to make her plea. He gave her permission to enter religion in order to escape death at the hands of the cabal, but he demanded time to deliberate his action—a curious show of courage in view of two earlier efforts voluntarily to enter a monastery.¹²⁵ Judith was thus only partially successful. The magnates were hesitant to execute their threat of death upon her, but by that time the masses, inflamed and poisoned by malicious rumors, were shouting for her punishment. She was, therefore, banished to Poitiers and required to take the veil at St. Radegunda's convent of the Holy Cross,¹²⁶ where fifteen years before Wala's sister had been exiled.

Co-Emperor Lothair arrived at Compiègne from Italy to protect his interests.¹²⁷ Although under persistent pressure, Louis rejected the demand to be tonsured, but formally declared to the assembly, according to Paschasius, an eyewitness, "I do now solemnly avow that never again will I do anything further without your counsel. I decree and will that the empire continue as formerly ordained and constituted [in 817] by me with your consent."¹²⁹ The barons were victorious and vengeful. Judith's brothers, Conrad and Rudolf, were forcibly tonsured and

¹²³ VHLud., III, 44:1 (*Son*, 90).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 44:2 (*Son*, 90).

¹²⁵ Once before his first marriage and again before his second; cf. VHLud., I, 19:1 and II, 32:2 (*Son*, 50f., 69).

¹²⁶ VHLud., III, 44:2 (*Son*, 90).

¹²⁷ VHLud., III, 45:1 (*Son*, 90).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 44:2 (*Son*, 90).

¹²⁹ *Wala*, II, 10:1 (*Cousins*, 168)

banished to monasteries in Aquitaine.¹³⁰ Bernard's cousin Odo was deprived of honors and property and sent into exile¹³¹ and his brother Heribert was, over Louis's sensitive protest, cruelly blinded and sent to detention in Italy.¹³²

Lothair assumed the reins of government and assigned monks to work on his father's conscience.¹³³ With honorable worthiness he took his young, seven-year-old half-brother and godson under his care and protection.¹³⁴ Pepin then returned to Aquitaine. On the surface harmony and dignity had been restored and war had been averted. Louis was still emperor, but in name only; Lothair as co-emperor was regent of the empire and recognized by his father as his successor to sole government.

For six or seven months Empress Judith suffered, like an earlier Héloïse, restriction to cloister life at St. Radegunda, deprivation of her husband and son, separation from her lover Bernard, if lover he was, and above all loss of the recent gay life at court. One can only guess her sentiments and emotions. Except for her deprivations—if one can make so large an exception!—the cloister was a pleasant and charming place, where in the sixth century the poet Venantius Fortunatus had settled down to become a troubadour of the Thuringian princess, Radegunda, wife of King Lothair I, son of Clovis; where he wrote that great processional hymn of the Middle Ages, "The royal banners forward go," and a "dream of the rood," "Sing, my tongue, how glorious battle."¹³⁵ Did memory of him and his poetry linger in the delightful garths? However that may be, the abbess and sisters were accustomed to the presence of noble ladies and many privileges were granted an empress, even a banished empress who was supposed to become a member of the community.

Judith was surely realistic enough to make the best of a

¹³⁰ Ann. Bert., 830.

¹³¹ VHLud., III, 45:1 (*Son*, 91).

¹³² Ann. Bert., 830.

¹³³ Nithard, I, 3.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars*, (reprinted from the 6th ed.; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 25-28

situation not of her own choosing. The annalist recorded that she was extraordinarily devout and meritorious in both day and night Offices. So intent was she that in a short while she made a deep impression on the sisters, all of them acknowledging that they wished they could equal her devotion.¹³⁶ But as the future was to prove, Judith, only twenty-six years old, was storing up resentment, bitter, profound, and lasting. It is quite probable also that she was in some kind of communication with intimates of the court, for again as the event was to prove, surveillance was lax and Louis was able to spin a web of his own.

Monks assigned to persuade Louis were the first to succumb to his scheming. But as summer passed, others, already grieved about results of the revolution, began to observe that Lothair's government was deteriorating. Slowly sentiment for Louis's complete restoration began to crystallize. Dangling before a monk named Guntbald promise of place as imperial chamberlain, the shrewd older emperor dispatched him secretly, under pretext of a religious mission, to Pepin of Aquitaine and Louis of Bavaria, intimating that if they would come to aid their father he would enlarge their realms. Louis had calculated accurately: their greed and their jealousy of Lothair were stronger than their principles.¹³⁷ The younger Louis and his retainers had indeed remained aloof from the transactions at Compiègne, perhaps under the influence of his wife, Emma, sister of Empress Judith.

Those opposed to Louis had sources of information and they became increasingly aware of reaction that was gathering strength. As time for the autumn diet approached, they sought to have it meet in Frankish territory where they had a larger degree of control. Secretly resisting that proposal, Louis suggested a location further north, "distrusting," his biographer commented, "the Franks [his own people] and entrusting himself to the Germans [Judith's people]." He was therefore successful in prevailing on Lothair to join him in appointing Nijmegen on the Waal river as site for the meeting. Still fearful, however, he gave order that each magnate bring with him only

¹³⁶ Ann. Mett. pr., 830.

¹³⁷ Nithard, I, 3.

one retainer. Archchaplain Hidluin and Abbots Helisachar and Wala were forbidden to come at all.¹³⁸

In October, 830, followers of King Louis of Bavaria flocked in great numbers to Nijmegen to support the emperor. The opposition found itself hopelessly outnumbered and throughout an entire night pleaded with Lothair to join open warfare against his father, but in vain. On the next day Lothair meekly yielded to the new climate of opinion.¹³⁹ Reaction was in full swing. Plenary authority was restored to Emperor Louis alone; leaders of the conspiracy were taken into custody and held for judgment at Aix;¹⁴⁰ and Lothair was detained by Louis under house arrest.¹⁴¹ More significantly, the bishops, abbots, counts, and other grandes determined that Judith had been removed unjustly, illegally, and without trial. They ordered therefore that she, too, be brought to Aix for a lawful investigation, at which time anyone who lodged charges against her should proceed in court according to law or defend his case by judicial duel. Louis, fully vindicated, returned to winter at Aix-la-Chapelle.¹⁴²

Not long after the diet at Nijmegen, the emperor sent for Judith, dispatching to escort her as befitted her station his faithful half-brother, Drogo, bishop of Metz, and her beloved Charles, along with other loyal magnates. She was received at Aix with great honor and rejoicing.¹⁴³ There was a delay, however, before she and Louis could be completely reunited as husband and wife. Louis, with his strong sense of religion, waited for papal approval to release Judith from her vows and set aside her veil.¹⁴⁴ It is not known, but it may be presumed that the empress wore her conventual garb until formal permission to doff it. Judith may indeed have felt dismay at this treatment, which added to her already deep and abiding resent-

¹³⁸ VHLud., III, 45:1 (*Son*, 91).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 45:2 (*Son*, 92).

¹⁴⁰ Ann. Bert., 830.

¹⁴¹ VHLud., III, 46:1 (*Son*, 93).

¹⁴² Ann. Bert., 830.

¹⁴³ Ann. Mett. pr., 830.

¹⁴⁴ VHLud., III, 46:1 (*Son*, 93).

ment, but at least she could spend Christmas with her son whom she had not seen for half a year, and with her brothers, Conrad and Rudolf, who were also brought back from monastic confinement in Aquitaine.

In accordance with previous decision, the diet of empire assembled at Aix on February 2, 831. The three brothers, Lothair, Pepin, and Louis, were present.¹⁴⁵ Conspirators of the preceding year—Jesse, Wala, Hilduin, Helisachar, and Matfrid were specifically mentioned—were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death, with concurrence of the emperor's older sons. Louis mercifully commuted the sentences to banishment, with laymen to be tonsured and clerics (already tonsured) to be assigned to suitable monastic communities.¹⁴⁶ Lothair was then stripped of his status as co-emperor, reduced to his title as king of Italy only, and compelled to swear that without his father's permission he would never thereafter usurp authority in the realm.¹⁴⁷

Then came Judith's moment of triumph, her rehabilitation. In the meanwhile word had come from Pope Gregory IV releasing her from vows and permitting her to lay aside the veil.¹⁴⁸ Now, dressed as queen and empress, she presented herself before the emperor, his sons, and barons of the empire. The assembly was asked if anyone wished to make indictment of her. Not a single voice was lifted, although less than a year before there had been riotous clamor against her. Judith thereupon solemnly purged herself by oath of any charge that might have been alleged against her.¹⁴⁹ Once again she was wife as well as empress.

There were two interesting aftermaths of the diet. As soon as the commonwealth seemed to be breathing easily, the monk Guntbald, who had worked so industriously for Louis's restoration, hastened to apply for appointment as imperial chamberlain, second man in the realm, the office recently held by Count

¹⁴⁵ Ann. Bert., 831.

¹⁴⁶ Nithard, I, 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Thegan, 37.

¹⁴⁹ VHLud., III, 46:1 (*Son*, 93).

Bernard of Barcelona. The latter, not present at the time, sent messengers to urge his reappointment.¹⁵⁰ No doubt Judith added her voice, but in this instance the emperor, prudently recognizing that "discretion was the better part of valor," designated Guntbald. Could it be that Louis himself half-suspected an element of truth in the year-old allegations involving Bernard and Judith?

Before Louis gave his three older sons leave to depart to their kingdoms, Lothair to Italy, Pepin to Aquitaine, and Louis to Bavaria, he fulfilled his promise made through Guntbald to enlarge the areas controlled by Pepin and the younger Louis at Lothair's expense. By advice of his councilors, however, he declined to indicate who would be paramount ruler at his death.¹⁵¹ The vengeful hand of Judith, once again seeking ways to advance her son Charles, may be presumed behind that decision. So both Pepin and young Louis, as well as Lothair, departed disgruntled.

The full wrath of Judith, tasting the heady wine of revenge, was reserved for Wala. His first place of banishment was an almost inaccessible cave in a high mountainous region near Lake Lemman. Not satisfied that it was confining enough, Judith became fearful also that it was too near Lothair, who might embroil the abbot in his machinations.¹⁵² So he was removed to Noirmoutier. There he was accepted with open arms by the brothers. Judith then had him deported to Germany, stating that she would rather him not be alive anywhere.¹⁵³ The bishops and abbots of Germany showed him such favor even in exile that Judith was now fearful he might become involved in intrigue with King Louis of Bavaria. So she had him returned to his abbey of Corbie, but shorn of honors and authority¹⁵⁴ —all the foregoing in a period of less than three years for a man who was about fifty-eight when it began in 831.

In the minds of some barons Judith's return was of itself

¹⁵⁰ Nithard, I, 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Wala, II, 11:2 (*Cousins*, 174).

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, 12:2 (*Cousins*, 177).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 14:1 (*Cousins*, 178f.).

distasteful enough, but when to it was added her relentless desire for revenge, of which she made no secret, undercurrents of murmuring began anew. Some churchmen expressed shock, first, that Judith had been released from her vows, and, secondly, that she was permitted to resume her place as the emperor's consort.¹⁵⁵ But Louis was so pleased to savor restored authority, to have Judith and Charles with him, to realize a sense of victory, that by the diet of Ingelheim (May 831), he was feeling magnanimous. He therefore proceeded to grant amnesty to many of those previously sentenced to banishment.¹⁵⁶ But not even the emperor's mercy deterred Judith in her persecution of Wala.

Clemency, however, may have been a preliminary step. Contrary to custom there were three diets of the empire in 831 instead of two. To the third at Thionville in October the older sons were summoned. Lothair, who had also been present at the May meeting, and Louis of Bavaria came, but Pepin flouted the summons.¹⁵⁷ The occasion was marked by the presence of emissaries from the caliph of Baghdad, from the Danes, and from the Slavs, all seeking confirmation of peace and treaties of friendship.¹⁵⁸ But most dramatic was appearance of Count Bernard of Barcelona, daring for the first time in a year and a half to leave the safety of his Spanish possessions and show himself in Frankland. Here, too, one may probably discern the work of Judith.

Bernard's purpose was to purge himself of vicious charges that had been leveled against him, and perhaps to regain his former position at court. At the diet, therefore, Bernard issued his challenge to meet in judicial combat anyone who made accusations against him. No one dared to come forward and pick up the wager. The count then accomplished purgation by oath in presence of the emperor, the two kings, the assembled grandees, and no doubt Judith.¹⁵⁹ It was another momentary triumph

¹⁵⁵ Agobard, *Liber apologeticus*, 9 (3) (PL civ, 316D); *Wala*, II, 11:2 (*Cousins*, 174).

¹⁵⁶ *VHlud.*, III, 46:1 (*Son*, 93).

¹⁵⁷ *Thegan*, 38.

¹⁵⁸ *Ann. Bert.*, 831.

¹⁵⁹ *VHlud.*, III, 46:2 (*Son*, 93f).

for her. But instead of being reinstated in the palace, he was given permission to withdraw southward to nurse his wounded feelings.

To punish King Pepin for his churlish refusal to come to Thionville, Louis ordered his son to Aix-la-Chapelle. Pepin did not arrive until shortly before Christmas. Thoroughly angered, the emperor detained him against his will until December 27. Pepin, indignant at such treatment, contrived during that night to escape surveillance. With a few of his followers, he fled under cover of darkness to Aquitaine, where he quickly joined forces with Count Bernard¹⁶⁰—a foreboding act arousing in Louis suspicion and in Judith mixed emotions. Trouble was again in the making; an eclipse of the moon during December seemed to confirm the ominous mood of the time.¹⁶¹

Early in February, 832, Louis took counsel and decided upon a diet at Orléans to discuss how to deal with Pepin. Lothair and Louis were ordered to meet their father at Aix and accompany him to Orléans.¹⁶² But hardly had spring begun when, at the time of another lunar eclipse, information reached the emperor that his son, King Louis, goaded by the deposed Count Matfrid, had invaded Alamannia in force.¹⁶³ That was part of the land granted to young Charles. Judith, ever mindful of her son's rights, urged resistance. The emperor, therefore, marched swiftly to meet the hostile expedition and approached Lampertsheim where King Louis had encamped. The latter quickly retreated, but the emperor pursued. They met in Augsburg where young Louis, choosing to surrender and swear that he would never again undertake a rebellion or even listen to those suggesting one, was dismissed to his own lands.

The campaign, organized so hurriedly, had caused Emperor Louis to leave Judith in Aix. But in May she came to meet him at Salz.¹⁶⁴ Apparently they had some time together during which they visited the monastery of Fulda. It was there that Rabanus Maurus presented the emperor a commentary on the

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 47 (*Son*, 94); Ann. Bert., 832.

¹⁶¹ Ann. Xant., 831.

¹⁶² Ann. Bert., 832.

¹⁶³ Ann. Xant., 832.

¹⁶⁴ Ann. Bert., 832.

books of Samuel and Kings.¹⁶⁵ To Judith he gave one of his figure-poems, a prayer that God would cherish her, not allow her to be hurt by any deceit, and crown her with honor.¹⁶⁶ Afterwards emperor and empress embarked in a boat for a leisurely trip down the Main. Lothair met them at Mainz. There it was agreed to hold the Orléans diet at the beginning of September.

From Orléans Louis and his armies crossed the Loire into Aquitaine against Pepin. The latter reluctantly met them at Limoges. His father upbraided him severely for his flight without permission. As punishment he was ordered northward under guard to remain in house arrest until he mended his ways.¹⁶⁷ His adviser, Count Bernard, was deprived of all honors and offices, banished to his ancestral estates in Burgundy, and replaced with a noble named Berengar.¹⁶⁸ Pepin, pretending to obey his father's order, again stealthily eluded his guard, escaped to safety, and raised his army to march against the emperor.¹⁶⁹ It was then that Louis took a desperate step, surely at Judith's urging: he declared the throne of Aquitaine forfeit, Pepin dispossessed, and—with Lothair's acquiescence—gave it to young Charles, then nine and a half years old.¹⁷⁰ War was about to begin, but autumn rains and winter snow and ice blocked the roads. Aquitanians, accustomed to the terrain, made repeated, unexpected, and successful attacks.¹⁷¹ Louis was compelled to retreat to Le Mans where he spent the Christmas season.¹⁷²

Moving northward he made a grant to the convent of Chelles at the request of Abbess Eigilwi, Judith's mother, and at

¹⁶⁵ Rabanus Maurus, *Carmen III* (PLAC, II, 164).

¹⁶⁶ Rabanus Maurus, *Carmen VI* (PLAC, II, 166). The figure is illustrated in PLAC, II, 165).

¹⁶⁷ VHLud., III, 47:1 (*Son*, 95); Ann. Bert., 832.

¹⁶⁸ VHLud., III, 49:2 (*Son*, 99f.).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 47:1 (*Son*, 95).

¹⁷⁰ *Annales Fuldenses*, I, 832, in G. H. Pertz and F. Kurze, edd., *Annales Fuldenses* (Hanover: Hahn, 1891), 1-28. These annals are hereinafter cited thus: Ann. Fuld., I (followed by the appropriate year); later years, 828-902, are also given in Rau, *op. cit.*, III, 20-176.

¹⁷¹ VHLud., III, 47:2 (*Son*, 95).

¹⁷² Ann. Bert., 832.

Judith's request he made significant grants to one of her retainers.¹⁷³ It was obvious that the empress was again riding the crest of victory. For that reason perhaps the emperor hardly reached Aix-la-Chapelle, about February 1, 833, when intelligence came to his attention that his three older sons were again allied in conspiracy against him and Judith.¹⁷⁴ Rumors were again shrill and strident. Agobard was charging that Judith was a combination of Jezebel, Athaliah, and Delilah all in one.¹⁷⁵ Paschasius claimed that she alone was wielding the scepter of the realm and was surrounding herself with advisers more infamous than Bernard,¹⁷⁶ who fawned upon her, trampling under foot truth, justice, peace, and harmony.¹⁷⁷ The imperial side was replying that "the devil . . . was stirring up the sons . . . ,persuading them that their father wished to destroy them wantonly . . . and caused the emperor's sons to form a common league and muster as large an army as they could."¹⁷⁸

Apprehensively Louis, Judith, Charles, and their palace retainers approached Worms where they spent February through part of June. In the meanwhile the combined forces of the older sons were steadily growing. Lothair was able to persuade Pope Gregory IV to join them and go with him to Frankland.¹⁷⁹ Emissaries were sent to the aging Wala in his monastic retirement at Corbie. Declining at first to become interested, soldiers of the brothers threatened to take him by force.¹⁸⁰ The two sides met on June 24, 833, at Rotfeld in Alsace and took up positions facing each other: the three sons with the pope, Wala, and their followers on one side; the emperor, Judith, Charles, and their officials on the other. For six days the two sides negotiated,¹⁸¹ Judith taking an active part although behind the scenes.

¹⁷³ J. F. Böhmer, E. Mühlbacher, J. Lechner, *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751-918* (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagner'schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1908), 362f.

¹⁷⁴ Ann. Bert., 833.

¹⁷⁵ Agobard, *Liber apologeticus*, 11 (5), 12 (6) (PL civ, 318B-319AB).

¹⁷⁶ Wala, II, 16:1 (*Cousins*, 184).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 16:5 (*Cousins*, 185).

¹⁷⁸ VHLud., III, 48:1 (*Son*, 95f).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Wala, II, 14, 15 (*Cousins*, 179-184).

¹⁸¹ VHLud., III, 48:2 (*Son*, 97).

But bribery, promises, threats, or even principle prevailed. By June 29 or 30—Paschasius stated, “in the course of a night”—the imperial side had deserted to the sons.¹⁸² Louis was then “induced” to surrender. The pope, who thought he might have effected a true reconciliation, was dismayed; the aging Wala was weighted with sorrow.¹⁸³ Louis approached his sons’ camp, requesting them to exercise mercy to him, to Judith, and to Charles. Judith was immediately removed to the custody of King Louis, her brother-in-law, while Lothair escorted his father and young Charles to his tents.¹⁸⁴ The 817 constitution was then reaffirmed with Lothair recognized as emperor. Judith was banished to Tortona in Italy and young Charles to the monastery of his preceptor, Abbot Markward of Prüm, but not tonsured. Louis was confined to the abbey of St. Médard.¹⁸⁵ Pepin went back to Aquitaine and King Louis to Bavaria, while Lothair, feeling quite sure of himself, hunted in the Vosges throughout July, August, and September.¹⁸⁶

At the diet of Compiègne in October, the barons, both lay and ecclesiastical, witnessed, among other things, the spectacle of Louis’s public humiliation in which he set aside his regalia and donned the garb of a penitent.¹⁸⁷ Ironically the chief prelate at the procedure was Ebbo, archbishop of Reims, Louis’s foster-brother and appointee,¹⁸⁸ in whose presence the emperor had received from the pope crown and unction in 816. Lothair, now apparently secure, appointed Matfrid of Orléans as his lieutenant, together with Hugo of Tours and Lantbert of Nantes.¹⁸⁹ In late November he retired to winter at Aix, taking his father with him under strict arrest.¹⁹⁰ In December, however, at a conference with King Louis in Mainz, Lothair was urged by his brother to relax strictures on the penitent. Lothair

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, Wala., II, 18:1 (*Cousins*, 191)

¹⁸³ Wala, II, 18-20 (*Cousins*, 191-196).

¹⁸⁴ VHLud., III, 48:2 (*Son*, 97f.).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 48:3 (*Son*, 98); Ann. Bert., 833.

¹⁸⁶ VHLud., III, 48:3 (*Son*, 98).

¹⁸⁷ Agobard, *Chartula* (PL civ, 319D-324A).

¹⁸⁸ Thegan, 44.

¹⁸⁹ Nithard, I, 4.

¹⁹⁰ VHLud., III, 49:2 (*Son*, 99).

refused and returned to Aix for Christmas.¹⁹¹ King Louis went back in sorrow to his own lands, but dispatched agents to his brother, King Pepin of Aquitaine, complaining of inhumane treatment meted out to their father.¹⁹²

After the feast of Epiphany 834, King Louis made another effort: he sent his emissaries, Abbot Grimoald and Duke Gebhard, to visit his father in Aix. Emperor Lothair consented for them to speak to his father but only in the presence of his liegemen, Bishop Otgar of Mainz and Count Richard (who was a kind of Cassiodorus or Talleyrand in the shifting sands of political change). Deprived thus of private conversation with *their* emperor, they contrived in some curious fashion to communicate to him by signs that King Louis of Bavaria was displeased with what was happening¹⁹³ —and another conspiracy was thereupon launched.

During the winter there was considerable agitation. It was reliably reported that throngs of people gathered at places throughout Frankland, Burgundy, Aquitaine, and Germany to express protest and indignation at Louis's misfortune. His illegitimate half-brothers, Bishop Drogo and Abbot Hugo, were actively consolidating resistance to Lothair; and so was the disgraced Count Bernard, then in Burgundy, but still a vassal of King Pepin.¹⁹⁴

Matters came to a head at the monastery of St. Denis near Paris late in January, 834. There at a diet of empire Lothair was faced by hostile armies of his erstwhile allies. Fruitless efforts were made to negotiate with an opposition that grew larger and more demanding as days passed. On February 28 he could no longer ignore the pressure. Leaving his father (Louis) and half-brother (Charles) at St. Denis, he fled with his most stalwart followers to Vienne, where he took some time to gauge his position.¹⁹⁵ On the next day, March 1, Emperor Louis was solemnly and joyfully reclothed with imperial regalia by the

¹⁹¹ Thegan, 45; Ann. Bert., 833.

¹⁹² Ann. Bert., 834.

¹⁹³ Thegan, 47.

¹⁹⁴ VHLud., III 51:2 (*Son*, 99f.).

¹⁹⁵ Ann. Bert., 834

assembled barons.¹⁹⁶ Thereafter he referred to himself officially as “emperor by divine mercy repeating itself.”¹⁹⁷ King Pepin and King Louis joined him on a triumphal progress later in March. On Easter, April 5, the emperor and his young son Charles celebrated the feast at Aix-la-Chapelle.¹⁹⁸

One of Louis’s first acts on his restoration was to dispatch emissaries to Italy to release Empress Judith from detention and return her to him. Indeed the annals of Xanten state that King Louis of Bavaria, no doubt acting on the request of his wife Emma, Judith’s sister, had already sent for her.¹⁹⁹ In the meanwhile those in Italy who were loyal to Emperor Louis feared that her life was in danger from retreating adherents of Lothair. They had, therefore, immediately rushed to Tortona to rescue her. Among these faithful ones were Bishop Rathold of Verona, Count Boniface of Tuscany, and—almost unbelievably—Pepin, great-nephew of Louis and son of tragic King Bernard of Italy. The three named, at peril of losing their properties and rights in Italy, constituted themselves her escort back to Aix before the month of April was over.²⁰⁰

Judith was again vindicated and again she was eager for revenge. There were still pockets of resistance to Louis’s restoration. At her instigation troops were dispatched to take Counts Matfrid and Lantbert dead or alive,²⁰¹ but in the ensuing battle the latter were victorious. Lothair advanced to help his followers and captured Châlon. A number of the emperor’s vassals were tried by court martial and executed. In a particularly brutal and senseless action, a nun accused of witchcraft, Gerberga, sister of Count Bernard of Barcelona, was placed in a wine cask and drowned in the Saône.²⁰² By summer’s end, however, the forces of Kings Pepin and Louis, joining those of the emperor, compelled Lothair to surrender and take an oath

¹⁹⁶ VHLud., III 51:2 (*Son*, 101f.).

¹⁹⁷ E. g., Louis, *Diplomata ecclesiastica*, 192-205 (PL civ, 1238B-1267B), etc.

¹⁹⁸ VHLud., III, 52:1 (*Son*, 102).

¹⁹⁹ Ann. Xant., 834.

²⁰⁰ Nithard, I, 4; Ann. Bert., 834.

²⁰¹ Ann. Xant., 834 (the plural *direxerunt* suggests Judith’s part).

²⁰² Nithard, I, 5; Thegan, 52; VHLud., III, 52:3 (*Son*, 104).

of fealty. The restoration was then complete.²⁰³

Accompanied by faithful Bishop Drogo, Louis spent Christmas at Aix with Judith and Charles.²⁰⁴ It was their first opportunity to be together for any length of time since the revolutionary action of 833. Judith insisted that her husband impose exemplary punishment on those who had supported the second rebellion. Most of them had taken refuge with Lothair in Italy, but the continued presence of Ebbo in his great see of Reims was especially galling to both of them. So at Thionville in March 835 the bishop was compelled, in a manner anticipating a practice in some twentieth-century states, to convict himself of error and sentence himself to degradation.²⁰⁵

Wala was another thorn in Judith's flesh, although Louis wanted to pardon and restore him to honor and office.²⁰⁶ Judith ruthlessly vetoed such clemency, but Wala eluded her toils and also fled to Italy. To Agobard's comparison of the empress with Jezebel, Athaliah, and Delilah, Paschasius Radbertus now added that she was like the fierce Queen Brunhilda who hounded St. Columban from Luxeuil to northern Italy:²⁰⁷ "Both queens . . . were alike in wickedness. Although separated in time, they were associates in one crime of irreligion; alike in jealousy, intolerant of holy men who rebuked their like unmentionable wickedness and who might oppose them in any way."²⁰⁸

Still another to feel the hatred and revenge of Judith was Agobard, bishop of dissident Lyons. But he too was able to make his escape to Italy with his protector Lothair. Summoned thrice to appear and answer for his activities, he refused.²⁰⁹ Amalar, a prominent liturgiologist, was made administrator of the diocese in 835. It was there that he prepared the fourth

²⁰³ VHLud., III, 53:1 (*Son*, 104f); Ann. Xant., 834 (Judith's relentless pressure is indicated in the statement, "Emperor Louis and his wife pursued Lothair . . .").

²⁰⁴ VHLud., III, 54:1 (*Son*, 105f).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Wala*, II, 20:5 (*Cousins*, 196).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 21:2 (*Cousins*, 196).

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 23:3 (*Cousins*, 199).

²⁰⁹ VHLud., III, 54:1 (*Son*, 106).

edition of his influential *Liber officialis*²¹⁰ and produced *De ordine antiphonarii*.²¹¹ In the latter is found the first systematic discussion of the beautiful Advent antiphons or "Great O's."²¹² Amalar was one of the most original men of that epoch and an ornament of the court. Unable to reduce Lyons, he ultimately fell victim to an odious theological attack and had to leave the scene.²¹³ In 838 at Kierzy his "heretical pravity" was condemned and Agobard was restored.²¹⁴ Judith was not as successful with him as she was with Ebbo and Wala.

Quite evidently vengeance was sweet for the empress, but so was reward of her favorites. Bernard was, therefore, restored to his prerogatives as marquis of Gothia and count of Barcelona.²¹⁵ At length Judith turned again to concern for her son's inheritance. Aquitaine, which had been assigned to him, now quietly reverted to Pepin because of his help in reinstating Louis and because it had in fact never been out of his control. Judith's solicitude became more apprehensive as she observed her husband declining in health,²¹⁶ the empire suffering from external assault, and prodigies of nature threatening impending disaster.

The annals of Xanten record monotonously from 834 through 837 cruel incursions of Northmen attacking Frisia, devastating Duurstede, and capturing many women prisoners as well as various kinds of wealth, misfortune spreading along the frontier. With equal monotony they record for the same period damaging floods, eclipses of sun and moon, apparitions of the Northern Lights, cyclones, comets, preternatural thunder, and lightning, scorching heat, earthquakes, and "fire in the air in the form of a dragon... and the misery and calamity of men

²¹⁰ J. M. Hanssens, ed., *Amalarii episcopi opera liturgica omnia*, II, *Liber officialis* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948).

²¹¹ Hanssens, *ibid.*, III (1950), *Liber de ordine antiphonarii*, 13-109.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 44-49.

²¹³ Allen Cabaniss, *Amalarius of Metz* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1954), 84-90.

²¹⁴ Ann. Xant., 838.

²¹⁵ VHLud., III, 57: 59:1 (*Son*, 112, 115).

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 54:3 (*Son*, 107).

... daily increasing in numberless ways."²¹⁷ Judith began to fear that her husband's death was imminent.

The empress's apprehension passed into anxiety respecting her own and her son's protection from danger. She and her intimates devised a plan, namely, to secure advocacy of one of the older sons of Louis. The younger one, Louis, was indeed her brother-in-law; the middle one, Pepin, had been a force freeing the emperor in 834; but Lothair, only recently an enemy, was not only the oldest and heir of the imperial title, but after all godfather of young Charles, whose person and rights he had at baptism promised to defend against all enemies. Judith therefore began to urge upon Louis reconciliation with Lothair.²¹⁸

Much of the year 836 was consumed in those negotiations. Judith even relented and allowed Wala to be an intermediary. Accomplishment was impeded because of a prolonged illness which debilitated Lothair²¹⁹ and because of a series of deaths of those of Lothair's party: Wala, Elijah of Troyes, Jesse of Amiens, Matfrid, Hugo, Lantbert, and others, depriving "Frankland . . . of her nobility . . . , strength . . . , and wisdom."²²⁰ At the diet of Worms in September, Pepin and Louis joined their father, but Lothair was still ailing.²²¹ On November 19, the emperor, with Judith and her children (Hildegard, aged about fifteen; Charles, aged thirteen; and probably another daughter, Gisela, aged about five), was at Coblenz, where he spent several days before returning to winter at Aix.²²²

During the lull of early 837 Judith, "most beloved spouse and empress," urged her husband to confirm the immunities of the convent of Hohenburg.²²³ By now he was suspicious of the convenient illness and inactivity of Lothair. In consequence he decided to go to Italy, but he was prevented by a sudden incursion of Northmen which he had to repel.²²⁴ Other matters held

²¹⁷ Ann. Xant., 834-837.

²¹⁸ VHLud., III, 54:3 (*Son*, 107).

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 55:1 (*Son*, 108).

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 56:2 (*Son*, 110).

²²¹ *Ibid.*, III, 57 (*Son*, 111).

²²² Thegan, appendix, "imperator cum coniuge et liberis."

²²³ Louis, *Diplomata ecclesiastica*, 221 (PL civ, 1287B-1289A).

²²⁴ Ann. Bert., 836.

his attention throughout the year, but Judith and her palatines continued to press for a heritage for Charles. At the diet of Aix, therefore, in October, 837, Louis secretly assigned Charles certain northern lands of the empire, indeed the best part of the Frankish realm, so it was thought.

Louis of Bavaria was distressed when he got word of the badly kept secret. In March, 838, he sought a conference with his brother Lothair.²²⁵ The death of so many of Lothair's adherents, his own lingering illness, and the awareness of the two brothers how unstable their earlier revolutionary actions had been restrained them from precipitate decision. Other troubles faced Louis: the complaint of Septimanian nobles against Count Bernard,²²⁶ the conviction of Amalar and return of Agobard,²²⁷ the malaise of the court favorite, Deacon Bodo,²²⁸ and the depredations of Moorish pirates. At Nijmegen in June, however, there was a sharp exchange of words between the emperor and his namesake over redistribution of the state. The latter was summarily dispossessed of all his lands except Bavaria. He withdrew to that area to raise his forces in revolt.

The emperor appointed another diet at Kierzy in August or September. Pepin hastened to defend his interests. With his consent, Louis made still another assignment to young Charles, now fifteen years old, namely, the old area of Neustria (roughly western Gaul between the Loire and Seine).²²⁹ In presence of the assembly he girded the youth with a sword, symbol of his reaching the age of majority, and even more importantly solemnly crowned him as king. After oaths of fealty by the Neustrian magnates, Louis dismissed Charles to his new kingdom and Pepin to Aquitaine.²³⁰ As far as records indicate, it was the first time that Charles had been "on his own." Judith's triumph was now in principle complete.

But matters were not as settled as Judith may have supposed. King Pepin of Aquitaine died on December 13, 838, and King

²²⁵ VHLud., III, 59:1 (*Son*, 114); Ann. Bert., 838.

²²⁶ VHLud., III, 59:1 (*Son*, 115).

²²⁷ Cabaniss, *Agobard of Lyons*, 94f.

²²⁸ Paulus Albarus, *Letter XVIII*, 4 (PL cxxi, 503B).

²²⁹ Ann. Bert., 838.

²³⁰ VHLud., III, 59:1 (*Son*, 114).

Louis began a rebellion.²³¹ Throughout late winter and early spring of 839 the forces of father and son sparred with each other indecisively in Germanic areas east of the Rhine.²³² The Carolingian world suffered a severe shock at the conversion of Deacon Bodo to the Jewish faith, causing profound grief to both emperor and empress. A vision of an English priest gained wide attention: in it he saw a vast fleet of Northmen approaching to lay waste with fire and sword the greatest part of earth. And a new people hitherto unknown appeared in Europe, Russians, who came to Ingelheim seeking friendship with Louis.²³³ Judith again undertook her campaign to curry the favor and protection of Lothair.²³⁴ This time she was successful.

At her suggestion Louis sent messengers to his son in Italy, promising, in return for his assistance and guardianship of Charles, full amnesty and half of the empire apart from Bavaria. Lothair agreed and met his father at Worms in May, 839. After an affecting, typically medieval scene of reconciliation,²³⁵ Louis solemnly divided his empire. Lothair chose that part southward from the Meuse, leaving to Charles the western portion—and, of course, Bavaria alone to young Louis.

But many Aquitanian nobles took it amiss that their kingdom fell to Charles. They preferred as their king Pepin II, son of the recently deceased King Pepin. Louis, however, was adamantly determined to install Charles on that throne. He summoned his armies and together with Empress Judith and King Charles crossed the Loire to enforce his will. Most of the Aquitanian magnates hurriedly swore fealty; but many, maintaining allegiance to Pepin II, among them Count Bernard, resorted to guerrilla warfare. Consequently Louis decided to remain near at hand and chose to spend the winter at Poitiers,²³⁶ a place which must have held bitter memories for the empress.

²³¹ Ann. Bert., 838.

²³² *Ibid.*, 839.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ VHLud., III, 59:2 (*Son*, 115).

²³⁵ Nithard, I, 7.

²³⁶ Ann. Bert., 839.

In the meanwhile the disgruntled King Louis of Bavaria invaded Alamannia in defense of his rights. The emperor, already feeling his age (sixty-one years), his lungs and chest severely congested, returned during Lent of 840 to Aix, leaving Judith and Charles in Poitiers.²³⁷ Later he crossed the Rhine in force and King Louis retreated.²³⁸ Growing weaker, tormented by his bad health, he took to bed on an island in the Rhine near Mainz. There in the presence of witnesses he made a nuncupative will, entrusting crown and sword to Lothair on condition that he keep faith with Judith and Charles according to the recent division, but he remained bitter toward King Louis. On June 20, apart from his wife and sons, with only faithful Drogo and a few attendants present, he breathed his last words, "Avaunt! Avaunt!" as though he had seen an evil spirit, then smiled for the only time in his life, and died.²³⁹

Lothair immediately claimed the crown of empire and hastened northward from Italy to vindicate his rights against both of his brothers, who with equal dispatch armed themselves to challenge him.²⁴⁰ Events thereafter moved rapidly. Lothair made tentative alliance with forces of his nephew, Pepin II, to harass Charles, while he himself tried to deal with King Louis.²⁴¹ It was perhaps Judith who suggested to her son a rapprochement with her brother-in-law Louis.

While Charles was away for that purpose, Pepin II and his followers made an attempt to capture Judith as a hostage. Charles had to return quickly to protect her. In the meanwhile a diversion was created by Pepin, son of Bernard of Italy, who rose in revolt against Lothair. That gave Charles and Louis their opportunity. The former, having no place where he could leave his mother in safety, took her with him to a meeting with Louis.²⁴² They tried to persuade Bernard of Barcelona to accompany them, but he strove to remain neutral. Charles, remembering with some pain the treatment that his father had

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 839, 840.

²³⁸ *VHlud.*, III, 61:1; 62:1 (*Son*, 117, 120).

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 62:4; 63:2; 64:2 (*Son*, 122-125).

²⁴⁰ *Ann. Bert.*, 840.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 841; Nithard, II, 2.

²⁴² Nithard, II, 3.

suffered from Bernard, attacked him. In defeat Bernard swore fealty to Charles.²⁴³ A great army then marched to join Louis.

Charles, his mother, and his followers reached Châlons-sur-Marne and waited there for Louis.²⁴⁴ The two then advanced to Fontenoy and resorted to arms against Lothair on June 25, 841. Although the carnage was unbelievable, the stalemate continued.²⁴⁵ Bernard, having cautiously withheld his troops from the battle, was compelled to give his son William to Charles as hostage for loyalty in the future.²⁴⁶ Louis withdrew east of the Rhine and Charles with his mother crossed south of the Loire.²⁴⁷ Continued confusion stalked the land with one or more of six parties at one time or another taking the field against one or more of the others. Even Charles's sister Hildegard became one of the combatants.²⁴⁸

But on St. Valentine's Day, 842, Louis and Charles entered a solemn league at Strasbourg in the famous oaths which offer for the first time evidence of an emerging French language.²⁴⁹ What must have been the thoughts of two sisters, Judith and Emma, visiting each other on that occasion? In their childhood they had spoken the same Germanic tongue and probably still did so when occasion required. But now the elder was living in an environment in which another, a Romance, dialect was the language of everyday life.

The magnates of all three brothers, weary of incessant strife, decided to make their influence felt. The three protagonists were consequently compelled to meet at Langres in June to discuss a just and amicable settlement. Reluctantly a threefold division was agreed upon and a precarious truce was established. Lothair thereafter departed to Aix, Charles to Aquitaine, and Louis to Saxony.²⁵⁰

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, II, 5.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 9.

²⁴⁵ *Versus de bella quae fuit acta Fontaneto* (PLAC, II, 138f.).

²⁴⁶ Nithard, III, 2; Bondurant, *Le manuel de Dhuoda*, praef., 6.

²⁴⁷ Nithard, III, 2.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 4.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 5.

²⁵⁰ Ann. Xant., 842.

Judith seemed to have been relatively satisfied. In any case she was no doubt acting behind the scene in arranging a suitable marriage for her nineteen-year-old son. Her choice, and surely his, was Ermentrud, daughter of Odo, cousin of Bernard of Barcelona and briefly count of Orléans. The wedding took place shortly before Christmas at Kierzy.²⁵¹ Whether Judith was present at the festivities is not known, but Charles had reached the peak she had hoped for him. In her honor a daughter of the union was named Judith, much later second wife of Ethelwulf, king of the West Saxons, and after his death, of his son, King Ethelbald.

Judith appeared only one more time in Carolingian chronicles. On April 19, 843, the annals of Xanten recorded that "Empress Judith, mother of Charles, departed this life at the city of Tours," and then added the strange and unaccountable remark, "robbed of her wealth by her son," the precise meaning of which is uncertain.²⁵² Was that the reward she should have received at the age of thirty-nine for her two decades of cunning and craft to secure for him a rightful place in the empire? Was it Charles's declaration of independence from her constant and confining attention? Or was it perchance a subtle expression of suspicion about her and Count Bernard?

She did not live to know of the treaty of Verdun in August, 843, which brought a measure of peace to the declining empire.²⁵³ Nor did she live to know that in January or February, 844, Count Bernard of Barcelona, once thought to be her lover, was captured, condemned for *lèse-majesté*, and executed by order of Charles.²⁵⁴

Judith's demise coincided with division and ultimate dissolution of the empire of her father-in-law and her husband. It coincided with appearance of the French vernacular, and thus with emergence of integral France as an incipiently territorial state. Her death therefore signalized the end of one era and

²⁵¹ Ann. Bert., 842.

²⁵² Ann. Xant., 843.

²⁵³ Ann. Bert., 843.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 844; Ann. Xant., 844.

opening of another. Like Eleanor of Aquitaine, her distant descendant, she had been wife of one emperor, mother of another, step-mother of still another, as well as stepmother of two kings, sister-in-law of one of them. Like St. Joan of Arc, she had been a hated symbol and a beloved center for two hostile parties. She had inspired bitter invective and chivalric poetry. She had caused wars and secured peace. She has, therefore, deserved better treatment than history has hitherto accorded her.